



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

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Division
for Church
in Society

March 30, 2000

Brigadier General Carl A. Strock
Department of the Army
Walla Walla District Corps of Engineers
Attention: Lower Snake River Study
201 North Third Avenue
Walla Walla, Washington 99362-1876

Dear General Strock:

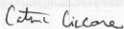
I am writing to you today on behalf of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). With over 5.1 million members, the ELCA is the largest organized body of Lutherans in the country. As a church, we proclaim that all human beings "...depend on God, who places us in a web of life with one another and with all creation." This interdependency calls us to be just in our relationships, where "...justice...means honoring the integrity of creation, and striving for fairness within the human family." We believe such justice can be achieved if our personal actions and public policy judgements are guided by the principles of solidarity, sufficiency, and sustainability. In other words, we must "...stand together as God's creation..." to ensure that the basic needs of all the present generations on the earth are met without compromising the quality of life for future generations (*Caring for Creation: Vision, Hope, and Justice*, ELCA, 1993).

In light of this background, I write to you today regarding the partial removal of the Ice Harbor, Lower Monumental, Little Goose, and Lower Granite dams from the lower Snake River. Our hope is that we can honor the integrity of creation by doing what we can to restore the salmon runs. Undeniably, the presence of the dams has already had a destructive impact on the earth and its people, devastating the usual and customary fishing grounds of the Confederated Tribe of the Umatilla, and causing economic hardship for the fishers of the Pacific Coast. However, other members of the human family stand to endure hardship if the dams are removed. Of particular concern are farmers, already in a fragile economic position, threatened by the rising costs of transportation and electricity. No matter what is decided, the church stands in solidarity with those who will be most hurt by any action. We call for increased public investments in alternatives to insure that no one group will have to bear the economic burden of this policy alone. To destroy the dams without such alternatives would be unjust.

The ELCA recognizes the delicate intricacies involved in this decision. Strong feelings and valid reasoning run deep on both sides. In an effort to engage in the dialogue and nourish a new public vision of this controversial subject, the ELCA has already sponsored two separate days of moral deliberation on the dam removal issue. Furthermore, we are committed to continued participation in the public dialogue, raising consciousness to the many sides of this debate, that the needs and concerns of both opponents and proponents may be considered and addressed in the final policy decision.

Thank you for your time, and God's blessings as you deliberate on this important matter.

Sincerely,



Catrina Ciccone
Legislative Assistant
Lutheran Office for Governmental Affairs

cc: National Marine Fisheries Service

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